

Harkin: Omnibus Agreement Supports Health & Wellness

“The omnibus agreement advances my long-standing priority of shifting American health care from a sick-care system to a genuine health-care system emphasizing wellness, prevention, and public health. I am particularly encouraged that resources for the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which I created in the Affordable Care Act, are dedicated 100 percent to prevention and wellness, including major new funding for the CDC to prevent diabetes and heart disease, and to ramp up anti-smoking initiatives.” – Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA)

On Thursday, January 16, 2014, the U.S. Senate approved H.R.3547, the omnibus spending package. The package included vital funding for wellness and prevention, included by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), as Chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee. The bill provides nearly \$1 billion for the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which Harkin created in the Affordable Care Act. In past years, funds have been diverted to other healthcare purposes. The bill also includes a \$1 billion increase to the National Institutes of Health to continue vital biomedical research and launch new studies and trials.

Among the highlights of Chairman Harkin’s efforts to invest in health to expand NIH’s reach and continue strong investments in prevention and wellness:

Prevention and Public Health Fund – The omnibus allocates the Prevention and Public Health Fund (section 4002 of the *Affordable Care Act*), authored by Senator Harkin. This is the first time that Congress has allocated Fund resources, as was intended by the law, since its inception.

Community Prevention Grants – The bill launches a new \$80 million program to help communities build multi-sector partnerships around better health. This initiative is the next step after the 2005 Healthy Communities program and the Harkin Wellness grants in Iowa. Grants will be made to municipal governments, school districts, business, and transportation providers.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) – The bill includes a \$1 billion increase to the NIH. This amount should allow the NIH to continue all current research programs and begin approximately 385 additional research studies and trials.

Within this amount, new funding is included for the Brain Research through Application of Innovative Neurotechnologies [BRAIN] Initiative, a multi-agency effort that also involves the National Science Foundation as well as several private sector partners. The BRAIN Initiative will accelerate the development and application of new technologies that will help explain how the brain records, processes, uses, stores, and retrieves information. Much like the Human Genome Project, mapping the brain holds significant promise for new treatments and cures.

In addition, the bill includes sufficient funding for the proposed initiative to study new ways to prevent and cure Alzheimer’s disease. The total payments for healthcare, long-term care, and hospice for people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias are projected to increase from \$203 billion in 2013 to a staggering \$1.2 trillion in 2050. Without a medical breakthrough to prevent, slow, or stop the disease, Medicare and Medicaid costs related to Alzheimer’s could rise an estimated 500 percent. Research is desperately needed to bring those costs under control.

Obesity Prevention – The omnibus bill more than doubles funding for obesity-preventing State grant programs on Diabetes prevention (\$137 million) and Heart Disease & Stroke prevention (\$128 million).

CDC’s Office of Smoking and Health – The omnibus includes a \$20 million increase for a total of \$205 million. This office is the sponsor of the public health media campaign “Tips From a Former Smoker.” A September [report](#), published in medical journal The Lancet, found that the 2012 campaign resulted in an estimated 1.6 million smokers in the U.S. trying to quit and 220,000 quitters as a result of the first year of this ad campaign.

For more information on Senator Harkin’s initiatives, visit <http://harkin.senate.gov/>, or follow him on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/tomharkin> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/SenatorHarkin>.